

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 088 817

SP 007 786

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TITLE           Benefits Accruing for the Teaching Profession Via  
                University - Public School Partnership.  
PUB DATE        [74]  
NOTE            22p.; Figure 1 will not reproduce clearly  
  
EDRS PRICE      MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.50  
DESCRIPTORS     Beginnring Teachers; Effective Teaching; \*Field  
                Experience Programs; Inservice Teacher Education;  
                Interinstitutional Cooperation; Practicums;  
                \*Preservice Education; \*Teacher Centers; \*Teacher  
                Education

ABSTRACT

Four components comprise the elementary education program offered at Illinois State University in cooperation with the Peoria Public School System. Three components familiarize the student with curricula in arts, communication, and the natural and social sciences. The fourth segment of the program is a full-semester clinical experience at the Peoria Teacher Education Center. The center program attempts to provide a wide array of experiences which promote the academic, professional, and community awareness growth of the student through: a) an exposure to the community and the total school district operation; b) observation, participation, and miniteaching at all elementary grade levels; c) completion of an 11-week period of student teaching; d) the integration of academic course work with actual daily involvement with schools; e) an extensive exploration of what constitutes teaching; and f) the development of a broad repertoire of teaching skills. The success of the program is apparent from the results of a study which show that a higher percentage of graduates of this program secure employment than do graduates of regular teacher training programs offered at Illinois State University. (HMD)

ED 085817

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BENEFITS ACCRUING FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION  
VIA UNIVERSITY - PUBLIC SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

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A new teacher "product" emerged on the scene in Peoria, Illinois, last year. This new teacher was a graduate of an innovative program in teacher education provided by Illinois State University's Teacher Education Center in Peoria. The center graduates, upon their exodus to an increasingly competitive employment arena, were found to be highly marketable products. In contrast to those who complete the traditional period of student teaching to meet certification requirements, these individuals had elected to enroll in the Peoria Center's semester program of clinical experiences. The participants evolved through a full semester of realistic preservice experiences within the Peoria Public School System which included: (1) an exposure to the community and the total school district operation, (2) observation, participation, and mini-teaching at all elementary grade levels, (3) successful completion of an eleven week period of student teaching, (4) the integration of academic course work with actual daily involvement in the schools, (5) an extensive exploration of what constitutes teaching, and (6) the development of a broad repertoire of teaching skills. The

Peoria graduates crossed the bridge to the profession more fully prepared and ready to serve in today's classrooms than is usually found to be true of first year teachers.

The Peoria Teacher Education Center has been in operation since September, 1971 and thus far 130 teacher candidates have successfully completed the semester of clinical experiences in the public schools of Peoria's District 150, and in the community. It is anticipated that approximately 50 students will be involved in the center program each successive semester. This new venture in off-campus clinical center teaching experiences had its birth when Illinois State University's Department of Elementary Education and Peoria Public School District 150 formed a cooperative partnership to meet present day demands for more extensive and direct classroom experiences for teaching profession candidates. The conjoint efforts of the partners permits greater utilization of the diversified expertise that exists within the elementary education department of the university and the public school system, in the preservice and inservice training of teachers.

Illinois State University, since its conception in 1857 as a normal school, has remained persistent in its quest for excellence in teacher education. It has consistently sought and encouraged continuous re-examination and re-evaluation of existing education programs and current practices so that improvements could be effected. The University continues to seek and support innovative preservice and inservice programs which produce teachers who meet the demands suggested by current staff deployment trends for more highly talented, versatile teachers who in reality prove themselves to be better able to meet the personal needs of each school child. It was in a "spirit of renewal" and in the pursuit of the university's goal for excellence in teacher education that the Elementary Education Department of Illinois State embarked upon a mission in 1968-1969 to do a comprehensive evaluation of its present training program for prospective teachers. The ensuing study and intensive assessment gave impetus to the development of the "Core Program" for the preparation of elementary teachers, and specified that clinical centers were to be integral components of the newly designed teacher education program for undergraduates.

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What is the "Core Program"?

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The elementary education department's program requires that the prospective teacher complete three unified cores of work on campus, and then complete a fourth core which constitutes a full semester of clinical teaching experiences at one of the university's teacher education centers. The three cores of work making up the on-campus academic component encompass the following areas of the curriculum: (1) the arts, (2) communication, and (3) the natural and social sciences. The four distinct elements contained in each core are: a common content of concepts and ideas drawn from the disciplines or knowledge represented by the curriculum area; knowledge about the cognitive, social and emotional development of children; knowledge about school curriculum patterns, organizational patterns, and the classroom teacher's role; as well as direct experiences with children for the application of knowledge.

The structure of the interdisciplinary core program permits each instructor within a core to cooperatively plan with colleagues so that needless

repetition about human growth and development, the school, and teaching techniques will be eliminated. Each instructor builds upon the work of colleagues and is better able to provide the student with reinforcement of ideas and skills according to individual needs. There is continuity and unity built into the program and this prevents the fragmentation often present in university work.

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What are the major objectives of the Peoria Teacher Education Center's Program? (Core IV)

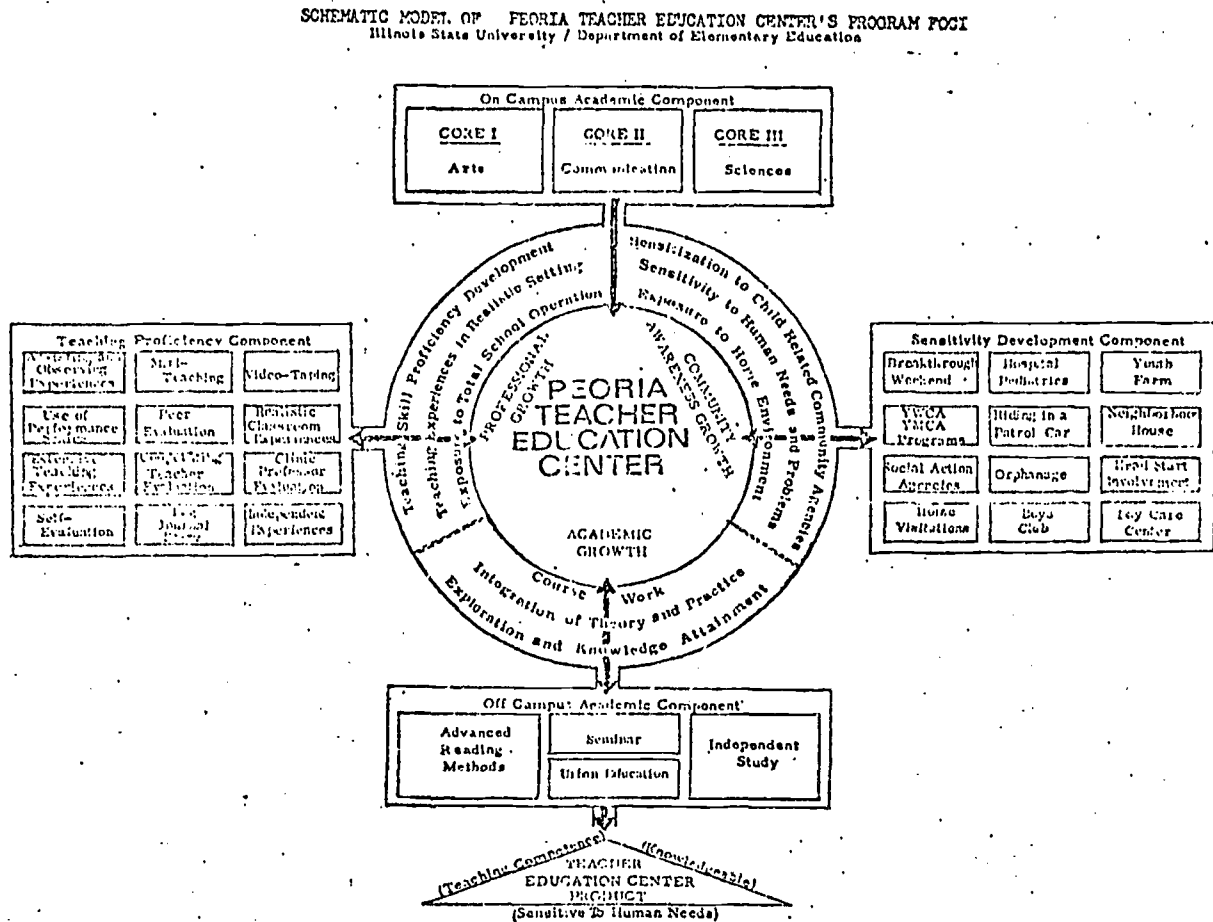
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The paramount goals of the Core IV component are to guide the teacher candidates at the center in developing teaching skill competency, and in discovering their own unique teaching style by providing a qualitative program of direct involvement in a multitude of elementary school experiences within a bona fide teaching-learning environmental setting.

The program offered at the Peoria Center is tri-focused in that it attempts to provide a wide array of varying experiences which promote the academic growth, (The Off-Campus Academic Component), professional growth, (The Teaching Proficiency Component), and community awareness growth

(The Sensitivity Development Component). The foci of the Peoria Center Program is presented in the following visual representation.

Figure I



Each area is viewed as an integral segment of the total program, and a high degree of import is given to the development of these interlocking components for the maximum preparation of new teachers. This strategic approach with



a three pronged emphases in the training of teachers is supported by a cognizance of present day societal needs which clearly dictate that the emerging teacher must be more than a performing technician or a subject matter specialist. The emergent teacher must be one who possesses broad knowledge about the teaching-learning process and is able to translate it into effective instruction for the individual child--one who demonstrates teaching skill competency, and the ability to respond to human needs and problems with sensitivity and awareness.

The utilization of the "centering concept" in teacher education provides a viable vehicle for accomplishing the in depth training needed for the maximum development of specific skills and abilities which have been identified in the Program Foci Model as being highly significant in the preparation of competent teachers. The broad range of activities that can be offered within the center domain provide boundless opportunities for the teacher candidate to pursue, explore, and attain knowledge through not only course work, but via active participation in self-initiated learning situations. The candidates are prepared for the use of specific competency based materials and given experiences to develop and

evaluate their own teaching skill proficiency. They are encouraged to filter into the community for the purpose of observing and viewing first hand the variance in socioeconomic environments while interacting with children in non-school surroundings.

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What are the successive phases through which a teacher candidate evolves?

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The Peoria Teacher Education Center semester program is divided into four phases as shown in the schematic illustration below:

Figure II

PEORIA CENTER PROGRAM PHASES

	PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III	PHASE IV
Week	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	18
Clinical Experiences	Orientation, Assisting, and community Awareness	Observation and Mini-teach Assign. Wk.	EXTENDED CLINICAL EXPERIENCES (Student Teaching)	INDEPENDENT EXPERIENCES
Courses	EED 298	SENIOR SEMINAR		
	EED 307	ADVANCED READING METHODS		
	EED 287	INDEPENDENT STUDY		
	EED 311	URBAN EDUCATION		

The candidates progress through an organized but flexible schedule of experiences starting with an orientation to the school and community, and then become involved actively in numerous and varied activities with children. There is gradual movement into extended clinical experiences which focus upon the examination and direct involvement of the teaching-learning process while working closely and cooperatively with veteran teachers.

The in-residence course work sessions are broken into modules for the purpose of integrating content with the experiences the teacher candidates are having in their respective clinic schools. A seminar dealing with the role of the classroom teacher as a member of the school staff is held weekly throughout the semester. The structure and content of the seminar sessions serve to make it a permeating force in the coordination of each phase and the facilitation of a smooth transition through the multi-phases.

Phase I of the program is designed to give teacher candidates a knowledge of: (1) the total school operation, (2) the characteristics of children at different ages and at all grade levels, and (3) various teaching procedures. The cluster of

4-6 program participants in each of the clinic schools is initially assigned to the principal. It is the principal's responsibility to arrange for the candidates' involvement as aides in the classroom, school office, library, lunchroom, and on the playground. During this time visits are made to the community agencies that provide a wide range of services for children. Each semester a number of the center program participants have selected to become involved in various community agency programs as volunteers. For example, Illinois State University-Peoria teacher candidates may be found working in the pediatrics ward of local hospitals, guiding scout troops, tutoring the mentally handicapped, serving as a big brother, or perhaps involved in a wide variety of other programs in service to children and young adults. A number of visits are also made to other clinic schools which are situated in differing socioeconomic areas of the city. The activities of Phase I have afforded them additional opportunities to gain valuable knowledge about children and their problems, and how to deal with them. Some specific examples of the community awareness experiences chosen to date are shown in the Community Awareness Component of the Program Focus Model. (Figure I)

The second phase of the program continues the professional growth development begun in Phase I. (Figure II) Observations to view varying teacher models at all grade levels are combined with the teaching of mini-lessons which are planned for and taught to small groups of 3-5 children. It is during this phase that all participants teach at least one mini-lesson at each grade level, even though they may be specifically interested in learning to teach at the primary or the intermediate level. A survey of the students at the conclusion of the second phase reveals that mini-teaching is viewed as one of the most valuable experiences.

The students stated that the numerous opportunities to teach small groups helped them to develop confidence in their own ability to plan and teach children before undertaking the full responsibilities of the classroom teacher. The teacher candidates expressed their belief that the opportunity to become familiar with the growth and developmental characteristics of children in grades K-8, and to select and prepare appropriate learning experiences for each grade level was invaluable.

All lessons taught throughout Phase II are critiqued by a peer partner, the teacher candidate and by one of the in-residence clinical professors. The

teacher candidates view video tapes of some of their own performances. The performance based evaluative materials which have been introduced in the seminar are used to analyze and assess teaching behaviors to aid in the development of the specific teaching skills of set induction, pacing, questioning, and closure.

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How is the cooperating teacher selected?

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A self-selection process is in operation during the final week of Phase II which permits the teacher candidate to choose a cooperating teacher. The center staff, teacher candidates, and clinic school principal explore in a "placement conference" their reasons for the specific choice. The rationale given for the selection of grade level and teacher is discussed, and carefully appraised by the conference participants as to the criteria used by the teacher candidate in making the choice. This placement conference helps to insure that the assignment of the candidate with the cooperating teacher selected will be one that fosters the development of professional growth to the highest degree, and will be one in which effective working relationships can be established. Proceeding the conference each selected cooperating teacher is consulted by the principal to ascertain if there is a willingness to

accept the teacher candidate before the placement is finalized. The utilization of the "self-selection process" with the center candidates has proven them to be perceptive and highly capable of selecting the cooperating teacher with whom they can best establish good working relationships--thus the commitment to each other is strong, and this contributes immeasurably to the professional growth of each cooperating teacher-teacher candidate team.

The third phase of the program is a period of eleven weeks in which the teacher candidate is engaged in large group teaching and classroom related activities. The apprentice picks up the teaching load at a rate appropriate to the individual's developmental level and capabilities, until full responsibility for the class, or the responsibility of a team member is assumed. Cooperative planning and innovative teaching by the selected cooperating teacher and student is encouraged and enhanced because of the readiness of the teacher candidate to become involved. Formative and summative evaluation which involves the cooperating teacher, teacher candidate, and center staff pinpoints the specific strengths and weaknesses of each program participant's performance.

The final phase allows for independent experiences such as observing pilot and innovative programs, or visiting other clinic schools to observe varying organizational patterns. A number of teacher candidates select to spend time witnessing the performance of district teachers in action who have been designated as exemplary models.

The semester program is climaxed with a recognition night for the cooperating teachers, clinic school principals, and others who have contributed to the program. Peoria District 150 administrators, school board members, community agency representatives, and faculty from the university are invited to attend the dinner. A program is organized and presented by the teacher candidates. The cooperating teachers are treated to dinner by their student, and receive a Certificate of Appreciation from Illinois State University. This event has contributed greatly to the growth of positive university-public school relationships.

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How many Centers are presently in operation?

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Illinois State University has developed and maintains two clinical centers



which provide the Core IV practicum of direct field experiences. In addition to the Peoria Center which has been described in this article, there is one in operation in Joliet, Illinois. The success of these two university-public school partnerships to date has given encouragement and support for the development of additional centers so that all of the approximately 400 elementary education undergraduate majors may have the opportunity to participate in the center program.

Experiences with the centers to date have affirmed the belief that conformity to one developmental structure should not be employed in the expansion of the "center concept." Each newly created center must be developed to utilize the uniqueness of its environment, so that it reflects individuality in its organization, formulated goals, and educational offerings, as it functions to provide the (Core IV) clinical experiences.

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What has the assessment of the Peoria Center operation and its "products" revealed?

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The teacher candidates emerging from the in-depth preparation experiences provided at Illinois State University's Teacher Education Center--Peoria are being

viewed with marked interest by employers. This is evident as administrators express greater interest in those who have been prepared for the teaching profession at one of the centers because of their full semester of involvement which encompassed teaching at all grade levels and exposed them to the total community, and school system spectrum. This was increasingly noted the past year as a number of administrators arranged with the center director to come to the clinic schools and observe first hand candidates in which they were interested.

The trend for greater marketability of the Peoria Center "product" is congruent with the results of a study conducted at the Joliet Teacher Education Center. The study revealed that a higher percentage of center trained teachers were securing teaching positions than those elementary education majors completing the traditional nine weeks program provided at Illinois State University. The first year classroom performance exhibited by those employed was generally viewed as being highly successful by the principals participating in the study.

The semester involvement in the Peoria Schools enables the clinic school principals to evaluate the candidate's ability to successfully work in and contribute

to the school system, and this has resulted in employment within the district for a number of each semester's graduates. District administrators have stated that the teacher candidate's knowledge about the district's total operation often exceeds that of many regular staff members.

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What significant benefits are accruing as a result of the partnership?

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The Illinois State University models of clinical centers to date have proven to be partnerships with new hope and strength for the teaching profession. These centers initiated by ISU are unique in that they are partnerships designed to provide for the inservice and preservice education of teachers. This conjoint association serves not only as an avenue for the culmination of sequential professional experiences leading to certification for new teachers, but also seeks to be of service to the public schools by providing upon request inservice opportunities for the professional growth of the district's classroom teachers. Presently, a graduate course, "Supervision of Student Teachers," is offered by ISU at the Peoria Center. The course is designed for preparing cooperating teachers to

work more confidently, and competently with their prospective teachers, and may be taken for three hours of graduate credit.

There are enumerable possibilities still to be explored which will permit the synergistic efforts of the public school district and the university to employ teamwork in promoting the professional growth of the veteran teachers while also providing viable programs of teacher education for those who are in preparation for the profession. Teacher education centers such as the one in Peoria provide a rich environment conducive to the creation of innovative instructional programs and allows for research into new modes of teaching and learning. Exploration which will lead to the development of improved evaluative procedures for assessing the quality of future graduates during their first years in the profession, and to determine what the emergent roles of the university professor and the cooperating teacher are to be in the clinical center setting must be encouraged and supported.

The symbiotic relationships existing between the university and Peoria District 150 has for the past two years been yielding many of the benefits that were anticipated from the onset by both factions of the partnership. A number of

ancillary beneficial by-products have surfaced as a result of this consortium, such as over 100 various clubs, projects, and experiences planned for the elementary pupils of District 150. The Peoria Center students willingly share their special skills and talents in organizing and managing these school related activities in addition to their regular duties.

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What is the prospectus?

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The Illinois State University-Peoria Public School consociation is representative of the improvement in relationships between public schools and institutions of higher learning which must be cultivated. The combined expertise of the partners can be channeled to replace effete modes of teacher education by cooperatively designing and implementing quality programs which better achieve the desired changes in the professional preparation of teachers. While it has been proposed that the "centering concept" can provide the dynamic thrust that is needed for the revitalization of present teacher education programs, it must be emphasized that the degree of success experienced by the centers in achieving their maximum

potential will be related directly to the degree that each consortium partner genuinely accepts its pre-established commitments.

The prime goals of the Peoria Teacher Education Center as we move through the seventies shall be to continue the search for new and better ways to provide the extensive preparation needed for those individuals who desire to become teachers. Strengthened programs will be sought which will permit those completing Core IV to have successful interactions in realistic teaching environments so that they will go forth to approach the task of teaching with genuine enthusiasm, and a broad repertoire of teaching skills in which they have demonstrated competency. It is imperative that renewed efforts be directed toward continuous evaluation and the effectuation of needed changes which will facilitate the attainment of these goals if we are to develop dynamic teachers who illuminate the lives of those they teach and possess the power needed to vivify the teaching profession. Experiences at the Peoria Teacher Education Center have affirmed a belief that through cooperative university-public school partnerships which create and actively

support innovative teacher education centers can be found a nucleus of strength and a milieu of untapped potential that will fuse new life into the teaching profession.

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